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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Egypt, Syria/Iran,
Lebanon, Iraq, Palestinian Territories (12/21-22)

11. Summary: Syrian papers on 12/21 reported President Asad's meeting with Egyptian President Mubarak, which focused on Lebanon and Iraq.

On 12/22 papers reported a press statement by British PM Blair expressing his government's readiness to start a positive and constructive dialogue with Syria according to "a clear vision." Papers also reported a statement claiming that US Ambassador Scobey may return to her post in Damascus next month.

Papers also reported President Asad's meeting with Iranian Vice-President Dr. Hussein Dahqan, who conveyed a message from Iranian President Ahmadinejad on the situation in the region and bilateral relations between the two countries.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"The Cairo Summit between President Asad and President Mubarak focuses on latest developments in the region. Presidents Asad and Mubarak review regional issues and the international investigation into the al-Hariri assassination. FM Shara: Syria contributed positively in improving the climate of the region.... There are no differences between the Syrian and Lebanese peoples.... There are Lebanese tools exploited to achieve narrow visions. Egyptian FM Abu al-Ghait: Egypt is satisfied with development of relations with Syria.... The summit comes within the framework of regular consultations." (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/21)

"The UN stresses that Mehlis' statements on Syria's alleged relations with the assassination of former Lebanese PM al-Hariri are not accurate and his report to the UN represents the official stand" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/21)

"Hizbollah casts doubts on the Al-Saniara government's desire for dialogue" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/21)

"President Asad congratulates Algeria's President Boutaflika on recovery and accepts credentials of new Yemeni and South African Ambassadors. President Asad receives message from Iranian president Ahmadinejad on the situation in the region and Syrian-Iranian relations. President Asad discusses current developments in the region and mutual cooperation with Iranian Vice-President Dahqan" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/22)

"Lebanese President Lahoud: I will not attend any cabinet session without the presence of Ministers representing the Amal Movement and Hizbollah. Lebanese Prime Minister Al-Saniara admits his mistake [in taking the decision on forming an international tribunal without obtaining a unanimous vote]. Head of the Supreme Shiite Council Fadlallah: The Lebanese people are capable of achieving internal stability" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/22)

"British Prime Minister expresses readiness for a constructive and positive dialogue with Syria. US Ambassador Scobey may return to post next month" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/22)

"Russian Parliament members express support for Syria" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/22)

"One Palestinian martyred, eight injured in the West Bank. Jerusalem's inhabitants are prevented from taking part in the elections. Israeli War Minister Mofaz precedes his meeting with Suleiman [Head of Egyptian Intelligence] by threatening to invade the Gaza Strip" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/22)

"Iraqi election losers unite to contest results of elections" (Government-owned Syria Times, 12/22)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Chorus of Sedition"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen,

positive and constructive dialogue with Syria according to "a clear vision." Papers also reported a statement claiming that US Ambassador Scobey may return to her post in Damascus next month.

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commented (12/21): "It is high time for the Lebanese to realize that their problem is not with Syria, but with the chorus that day and night plays the discordant tune of 'the Syrian conspiracy' to push Lebanon and the Lebanese towards internationalization...."

"The crisis is in fact fabricated. It is certainly not between Lebanon and Syria, but between Syria and foreign forces that pull some strings in Lebanon.

"Why are random accusations being made against Syria? Why are the Israeli factor and the Zionist-American scheme ignored whenever a murder is committed in Lebanon...? The chorus of screamers in Lebanon is in fact raising the demands that others make against Syria, not the demands of the majority of the Lebanese, who increasingly fear a return of the climate of division and fragmentation that will pave the way to a new civil war, while they have not yet forgotten the tragedies of the previous one...."

"A Hopeless Case"

Ahmad Dawwa, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (12/21): "Lebanese political leader Walid Junblatt's accusations against Syria are hellish imaginations...."

Junblatt said recently that Syria terrorized Detlev Mehli, chief of the International Investigation Commission into the Al-Hariri assassination.... This conclusion is horrible. Mehli never said anything of the sort.... Junblatt accused Syrian security agents of sweeping Lebanon, but he did not ask himself why the Lebanese security agencies have never arrested a Syrian agent.... Junblatt probably considers the majority of the Lebanese people, who support Syria, to be Syrian security agents....

"The problem is that Junblatt offers all these imaginary items without presenting evidence or solutions.... Junblatt says something and its direct opposite at the same time. If this shows anything, it shows the extent of his political panic and his arrival at a dead end. The Lebanese people can no longer be deceived by the campaigns of deception and forgery. They know that the attempt to escape from a problem by creating further trouble has become a characteristic of some politicians. This is why many nationalist forces in Lebanon are calling for reconsideration of all previous steps."

"What Follows Resolution 1644?"

Dr. Turki Saqr, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, said (12/21): "The strong Syrian domestic front has foiled foreign bets and plans against Syria...."

"The post-Resolution 1644 stage requires two basic things: First, we must not be confident that Syria has overcome the difficult and delicate stage. The above-mentioned resolution might turn much worse at any moment, especially since it was fully based on Resolution 1636. Second, we must not forget that the domestic front has been Syria's source of power in all its battles and confrontations. The aim of the lies and psychological warfare is to exhaust Syria domestically. The

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main response lies in turning serious attention to the

homefront without delay or reluctance. The first sign of such attention would be parallelism and harmony between political reform and economic reform, and the improvement of citizens' living conditions as a top priority. If haste is unacceptable, speed is not. We have wasted much time talking about reforms and the fight against corruption. Now it is time for work."

"False Courage and Lost Virtue"

Isam Dari, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, said (12/21): "President Bush made a series of confessions last week, believing this might be seen as courage and, consequently, might lead to an improvement of his popularity.... Bush's confession that he invaded Iraq on the basis of wrong information and his statement that he ordered spying on American citizens led to further embarrassment for him and his administration and exposed part of the dirty American policy, which is based on lies and violation of the American Constitution and the principles of international law."

"Bush's admission will not bring 100,000 dead Iraqis back to life or build a country that has been destroyed by the American army...."

"The American people are paying a heavy price for the US Administration's reckless policies and adventures, while the rest of the world is suffering from a US policy that is based on lies and fabrications...."

"Wild and Tame Weapons"

Ahmad Hamadah, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (12/22): "There was a new fabricated report in The New York Sun, quoting a former Israeli Chief of Staff as saying that Iraq transferred its alleged chemical weapons to Syria a few weeks before the American invasion...."

"Israel, which possesses all types of weapons of mass destruction, has returned to the same old allegation that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, an allegation that has proven false...."

"The allegation coincided with President Bush's admission that American intelligence reports on Iraq's weapons were wrong.... The former Israeli Chief of Staff called for holding investigations into these chemical weapons.... If the US administration invaded and occupied Iraq on a false pretext, who can guarantee that it will not, under Israeli pressure, fabricate more excuses to implement its plans against Syria and the region?"

"International accusations and inspections should be directed at Israel's huge weapons arsenal, which has been used to kill and displace hundreds of thousands of Arabs...."

"Where Is Europe's Interest in What Is Going on?"

Muhammad Ali Buza, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (12/21): "The European position and role

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in the region is ineffective.... Europe is not assuming its historical responsibility to bring about peace and security in this troubled part of the world.

"The EU's summit proclamation in Brussels expressed concern over Israeli practices in Jerusalem and renewed the call for an end to Israeli settlement activities.... Europe is offering nothing but repeated sweet words meant for Arab consumption...."

"The European discourse tolerates Israel's policies of aggression, growing Judaization, destruction of people and property, and killing of peace. The European position leaves Washington and Tel Aviv free to impose their agenda on the region, which is not in Europe's interest...."

Johnson-Casares